



A Report from the 2006 Legislature

To my constituents of the **5th Legislative District**

Rep. Jay Rodne

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Dear Friends & Neighbors,

For the past several months, **I've been meeting with constituents, community groups and other elected officials** in preparation for the 2006 legislative session.

The legislative session is now under way in Olympia and this newsletter provides you a window into some of the issues that impact our communities.

My priorities as your state representative continue to be **investing in our children's education**, keeping our **communities safe**, **revitalizing our state's economy**, and ensuring our **health care system is accessible and affordable**.

I believe it's **important to stay in touch with you** throughout the year. Unfortunately, this will be only one of two newsletters I'll be able to send you this year due to election-year restrictions. However, I'm still allowed to respond should you contact me about something specific.

If you ever have any comments, questions or concerns, **I encourage you to contact me** by phone, e-mail or whatever is most convenient for you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for allowing me to be **your state representative**. It's an **honor and privilege**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jay Rodne".

Rep. Jay Rodne

Representative Jay Rodne

Ensuring students are ready for the future

Public schools and the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)

Our K-12 public schools are funded through a mix of state funds, federal funds and local taxes. Nearly **half of the state's general fund is dedicated** to paying for **our K-12 public education system**.

Despite our **enormous investment in public education**, our high school graduation rates and WASL scores are disconcerting – and both must be improved. There are varying opinions on how to go about this, and **I've heard from many concerned constituents** on the issues.

One of my highest priorities this session is to pass legislation that will implement a **reasonable and responsible program for WASL remediation and alternative pathways**. We owe this to our children so that each one of them has **the opportunity to graduate from high school and be successful**.

Washington Learns Steering Committee

Washington Learns is an 18-month **comprehensive education study** that is taking an intense look at our state's **education governance, curriculum and financing systems** – from preschool through college.



Washington Learns will issue its recommendations in a final report on November 15, 2006. Its first interim report offered these recommendations for the 2006 legislative session:

- Improve the quality and availability of **early learning programs** and **resources** for parents of infants and young children;
- Invest in intensive, focused **academic support for high school students who need extra help** to meet the state's academic requirements in reading, writing and math, and provide schools and classroom teachers with additional resources specifically for this purpose;
- **Reduce the high school drop out rate** and help students plan and prepare for college, work or post-secondary job training; and
- Develop a **statewide student information system**.

I'll keep you posted on how these recommendations evolve this year.

Fiscal responsibility with our state budgets

The 2006 legislative session began January 9 and is scheduled to run 60 days.

One of the primary responsibilities of state legislators this session is to pass a **supplemental budget** – which is a **midcourse adjustment** to our state's two-year **operating budget**.

As you may recall, I did not vote for our operating budget because it grew state government spending by over 12 percent and raised taxes by hundreds of millions of dollars.

It's important we are **fiscally responsible** with our supplemental budget – as with all our state budgets. This means making sure state legislators are **accountable for your tax dollars** and **find savings** in our budgets.

A recent economic forecast shows Washington riding the momentum of a **national upturn in the economy**. However, much of the projected state surplus from this upturn is the result of our state's hot housing market which has been showing signs of slowing down.

I firmly believe we need to save any surplus for the future when our economy is not doing as well. Some argue we should spend the surplus now and increase spending for programs. I don't support this approach.

I believe we should **create a constitutional "rainy day" fund** to protect our state funding during economic downturns and **restore I-601 voter-approved spending limits** that require a two-thirds vote in both the state House and Senate to raise taxes.

Revitalizing our state's economy

Washington is experiencing the benefits of a **national upturn in the economy**. Yet, it won't last forever and Washington continues to have an unfavorable business climate in certain areas – just ask any small employer.

More must be done to **help the employers of our state**. They continue to face a **challenging business climate**, including too many state regulations, a high minimum wage, uncertainty in our unemployment insurance system, and an onerous B&O tax.

What our employers need is certainty – and this can be done through a legislative-driven **growth and opportunity package**. For example, this could include **removing unnecessary and costly regulatory hurdles** by creating **one-stop licensing, information and assistance**.

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Protecting our children through stronger sex offender laws

In October of last year, I hosted a community forum in Issaquah on the issues of sex offender registration, sentencing and monitoring. Citizens shared their ideas and concerns, while legislators and forum presenters provided an overview of laws and various proposals for the 2006 legislative session.

Through this community forum and several meetings with law enforcement, prosecutors, victims, and other concerned citizens, I worked in a bipartisan manner to create a comprehensive package that was introduced in the 2006 legislative session.

Washington has a good foundation to build on, but we must do more. Here are the main components of my proposed legislation:

- requiring 25 years-to-life in prison for an offender who commits a violent sex crime against a child;
- mandating 25 years-to-life in prison for a stranger who uses force to commit a sex crime against a child;
- renewing the ban on sex offenders living near schools or child care centers;
- requiring registration within 72 hours for sex offenders moving here from other states;
- mandating GPS trackers on the worst sex offenders (Level 3) who are homeless and have offended against a child;
- requiring those convicted of possessing child pornography to register as sex offenders; and
- increasing penalties for sex offenders who fail to register, or who lie when they register as homeless but actually have a fixed home.

Making your voice heard in Olympia

My seatmate, Rep. Glenn Anderson, and I hosted seven local town hall meetings in our district last December. We were able to visit with folks from Sammamish, Klahanie, Maple Valley, Issaquah, Black Diamond, Fall City, and North Bend. We'd like to thank everyone who attended and provided their feedback.

Here are some of the ideas we heard from folks:

- Provide a reasonable solution to the issue of WASL remediation and develop alternative pathways for students to achieving standards.
- Restore fiscal accountability in our state budgeting processes.
- Make the necessary, critical investments in our transportation infrastructure to improve safety and reduce congestion.
- Protect our children from dangerous sex offenders.

I have listened to your concerns and want to assure you I'm working hard each day to put your thoughts and ideas into action here in Olympia.

Making health care more accessible

Health care is still too expensive or unavailable for many people. We must look at systemic changes if we are to fully address our health care problems.

First, it's important we prioritize and eliminate some of the state health insurance mandates. These mandates drive up costs for everyone.

Second, we need market-based solutions that allow people to pick tailored programs that meet their specific needs and are tied to associated costs.

Third, we need to clear the way for health savings accounts, which allow people to use pretax dollars to pay for out-of-pocket health care expenses.

Finally, we need small group insurance reform so workers and their employers can purchase affordable plans that cover the health care services their employees absolutely need.



Representative Jay Rodne



Rep. Rodne enjoys a moment in the House Chamber with his son and daughter on "Children's Day."

"Get Connected" to your government

With this legislative session in full swing, I wanted to remind you of a **resource I have created for you**. The following link takes you to a guide for local and state government. I think you will find this **"Get Connected"** resource useful.

<http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/rodne/newsreleases/Rodne-Connecthandout.pdf>

Visiting our Capitol Building

Our Capitol Building is open to the public and as beautiful as ever. **I encourage you to come down and visit** this special and historic building. Please contact me if you plan to be in Olympia during the legislative session. **I'd be happy to meet with you.**

This website is helpful if you plan a trip:
<http://www.ga.wa.gov/visitor/index.html>



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